

(For Decision)

Special Meeting Joint Meeting

East Greenwich Fire District/Town Council

Date: February 4, 2013

1. The joint meeting of the Town Council and the East Greenwich Fire District was called to order by Council President Michael Isaacs and Commissioner William Daly on February 4, 2013 at 7:00p.m.

a. Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag

2. Members Present

a. Commissioners

- 1. William Daly, Chairman**
- 2. Stephen Bartlett, Vice-Chairman**
- 3. Mark W. Gee, Commissioner**
- 4. Mark Schwager, Commissioner**
- 5. Philip Higgins, Commissioner**

b. Town Council

- 1. Michael B. Isaacs, Council President**
- 2. Jeffrey B. Cianciolo, Council Vice-President**
- 3. Michael S. Kiernan, Councilor**
- 4. Mark Watkins Gee, Councilor**
- 5. Bradford C. Bishop, Councilor**

Also present: William Sequino, Jr., Town Manage, Peter Clarkin, EG Town Solicitor and Scott Spear, Legal Counsel EGFD, Peter

Henrikson, Chief, Russell McGillivray, Deputy Chief and Janice J. Peixinho, EG Fire District Clerk.

3. Public Comment – none

4. Business:

a. Discuss and Vote upon what action, if any, the course of action on the merger – Town and Fire District

Commissioner Bartlett opened the discussion by asking that the proposed Legislature Act being presented by the Town be corrected to say non-binding referendum and not just referendum in section 5. Commissioner Daly stated he was basically asking the Town Council to re-consider the issue. He read into the record a letter regarding the merger question, the fact that there was only one meeting to discuss the issue. He stated that prior to voting on the non-binding referendum the voters were not provided with any data or information in which it would demonstrate that the merger would: save money, lower taxes, increase efficiencies, improve managerial and financial oversight or improve the delivery of fire and rescue services. He said that there has been no discussion since October of 2012, no task force formed to know the amount of cost savings and that he would like to see the process through with a study. In his letter he read that arguments were expressed by members of the Town Council who strongly advocate an outright merger. He stated that one of the issues raised was the process for electing Commissioners. The concern is the FD Annual Financial Meeting in which a small interest group could elect those who might have their own special interests in

mind instead of the best interest of the FD. He mentions that the By-Laws and Charter of the FD could be changed to require the Commissioners to be elected in the General Election. Commissioner Daly stated that the five (5) elected members of the BOFC spend a considerably amount of time and energy providing managerial oversight to the FD operations than the TC could ever hope to spend on Town issues. Commissioner Daly suggested the following; create a task force to study the issues, evaluate the concept of the merger, explore the pros/cons of the merger, study the implications, benefits, cost factors and alternatives, make recommendations and then if the FD and the Town agree forward to the General Assembly.

Councilor Isaacs disputed Commissioner Daly's assertions regarding a lack of information and public discussion. He stated that the reasons for the proposed merger have been stated by Council members in numerous meetings and during the November election and referendum. He said that the referendum was referred to as non-binding because on the General Assembly can change the status of the Fire District. The Council did not want voters to think that their voting in favor would automatically cause the merger to take place. Councilor Isaacs stated that 2/3 (two-thirds) of the people voted for the merger and that the Fire District Commissioners in wanting to continue to debate the reasons are ignoring that there was a vote by the taxpayers. He said that the Fire District mailed a post card prior to the November election (which Councilor Isaacs held up at the meeting) regarding the non-binding referendum. He said that the Fire District does not want to acknowledge this is what the taxpayers

want. Councilor Isaacs presented a chart showing the Town and Fire District tax

rates and the percentage increases and decreases from the year 2000 through 2012. He said that the Town's tax rate changed 45.84% and the Fire District was 58%. Commissioner Bartlett stated that former Chairman Axelsen had previously produced a chart showing the District's tax rates over the years and that Mr. Axelsen was pleased with the accomplishments of the BOFC over the last 6 (six) years as he was a member of the Board. Commissioner Bartlett stated that he would not speak for previous years prior to being on the Board but things have changed since the last 10 (ten) years. Commissioner Daly asked "what's the rush" "what was the reason why this had to be done now". He stated that the Town had already taken over the process of the District's payroll, accounts receivables and accounts payables. Commissioner Daly again asked that a study be done and put together as a "white paper". He said that if a study was done it might come out the same or that there may be other alternatives. Councilor Isaacs then stated that the taxpayers have decided 2-1 and that the voters have instructed the Town Council to move forward. Commissioner Bishop asked about the District's web-site, minutes, agenda's and packets for meetings. The Town Council and Commissioners discussed the Act being drafted that will be presented to the General Assembly for approval. It contained 9 (nine) sections pertaining to acquisition, permanent and part-time employees, collective bargaining agreement, retiree's, benefits,

property, assets and personnel, action of the Town acquiring the District, authorizing the passing of resolutions both Fire District and Town, any and all elections with affirmative votes and property, equipment, vehicles, real estate, bank accounts, trusts, holdings and/or any other assets. Commissioner Higgins asked if Legal Counsel and Treasurer were consider part-time employees and Councilor Isaacs stated “no” only those that receive a W-2 form. Councilor Isaacs stated that in section 6 the word “may” can be changed to “shall” and that the retirees would come over to the Town. Commissioners and Councilor’s discussed OPEB (other post employee’s benefits), prior annual town meetings, budgets, people being elected in November elections verses Commissioners being nominated and elected at annual meetings. Commissioners asked about other consolidations in town services and Councilor Isaacs stated that the Town Council was putting all their efforts into the District consolidation because it is doable and it is the first step. Councilor Isaacs asked that the Commissioners review the draft and forward any changes before the Town Council’s February 25th, meeting. Other issues of discussion were regarding the land acquisition, contract negotiations and timeline for the merger. There was no vote or action taken and no other discussion.

(refer to audio for full disclosure of the meeting) (refer to proposed act presented by Town Council and the letter presented by Commissioner Daly) Also, it was acknowledged that Senator Hodgson and Representative Giarrusso were in attendance that evening.

5. Public Comment - none

6. Adjournment

Commissioner Daly and President Isaacs jointly entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:16p.m., Commissioner Bartlett 1st, Commissioner Schwager 2nd, Councilor Bishop 1st, Councilor Cianciolo 2nd, Unanimously Accepted, motion carried.

Attest:

A True copy;

Respectfully submitted,

Janice J. Peixinho

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EG Fire District Clerk